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ABSTRACT

Kathleen Blake Watkins Coleman, known to her readers as "Kit," was a late nineteenth-century journalist who tried to escape the limitations of the woman's sphere in journalism through travel writing, while still complying with the expectation that she describe her adventures from a "woman's point of view." Among her many accomplishments, "Kit" went to Cuba to cover the Spanish-American war for the Toronto "Mail and Empire," a stunt the newspaper hoped would boost circulation. Coleman's work in Cuba was recognized because of her determination to overcome almost insurmountable opposition by American authorities and many male colleagues who refused to recognize her as a professional and allow her to travel with the troops as most correspondents did. She was pressured to produce stories from a woman's angle, which meant that her work was seen as marginal. It also appears that her newspaper did not pay her full remuneration for her services. While (like her male colleagues) paying some lip service to American military interests, "Kit" was able to condemn the war from a "female" perspective--expressing concern, for example, for the soldiers on all sides of the conflict. "Kit's" enduring appeal throughout her 25 years as Canada's most successful woman journalist was due to her combination of "masculine" and "feminine" characteristics--she was outspoken, intellectual, emotional, and maternal. (Seventy-five notes are included.) (SR)

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A CANADIAN WOMAN JOURNALIST COVERS THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR: "KIT" IN CUBA 1898

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A CANADIAN WOMAN JOURNALIST COVERS THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR: "KIT" IN CUBA 1898

By the late 19th century, middle-class women in North America were no longer being confined to the domestic sphere of life in the Victorian era. They sought political and economic power outside the home and were attracted to various professions, including journalism.[1] At the same time, stiff competition among newspapers resulted in new strategies to enlist advertisers, including the establishment of women's pages and other regular features.[2] Because females were still seen as predominantly domestic and maternal in nature, editors hired female journalists, who were a decided minority in their field,[3] to write "light" material thought to be appealing to women--fashions notes and recipes.

Many of the early women's page writers worked and argued hard to overcome the limits placed on them by conservative editors and readers.[4] One of those journalists was an outspoken Irish-Canadian, known to her readers as "Kit," who, among her many other accomplishments, went to Cuba to cover the Spanish-American War in 1898.[5]

"Kit" was Catherine Ferguson Willis, one of the thousands of women to leave an economically-depressed Ireland during the latter part of the 19th century.[6] She was an impoverished, widowed gentlewoman, well educated in the classics, but who knew little about keeping house or earning a living when she arrived in Canada, aged 28, in 1884. It is clear, from the genealogical

record and family lore, that she gradually took on a new identity. She became Kathleen Blake Watkins (later Coleman), an internationally-known women's page writer, travel journalist, war correspondent and the mother of two children.[7] For most of her career, she was in charge of the "Woman's Kingdom" page in the Saturday edition of one of the major daily newspapers, the Toronto Mail[8] (later the Conservative Party organ, the Mail and Empire).[9]

"Kit" was an educated, cultured woman, who not only wrote about literature, the arts and her travels but discussed and debated politics, religion and science -- issues then seen as belonging to the "male" sphere. Her intellectual interests made her editors uneasy and she argued with them several times over the years about what was suitable woman's page material. At their behest, she grudgingly included fashions notes, which she detested[10] , and dutifully supplied her readers with household hints and recipes, gossipy items about royalty and theatre stars and an advice column in which she gave the maternal aspect of her personality full rein.

Because of the emphasis on the white, male experience of journalism history in North America, comparatively little has been written to date about the women in the profession.[11] The exceptions are studies of those who succeeded, at least partly, in the "male" sphere of newspaper work, thereby becoming "exceptional" in the eyes of historians and journalists. While women like "Kit" were not typical, it is important to re-examine them

from a feminist perspective in order to determine what sacrifices their successes in a male world entailed.

Feminist literary scholars who have examined women's history and women writing in the nineteenth century agree that there were constraints on female writers' creativity, related to their roles in society, which male writers did not experience.[12] One hundred years ago, women rights in education, economics, law and social life were severely limited. In order to be able to write about these problems and be taken seriously, female writers and journalists made use of various literary devices. Tillie Olsen describes many of these strategies, including male (or androgynous) pen-names; male heroes; writing with "objectivity" or "detachment"; or alternately, writing "like a woman" in order not to threaten men:

> Being charming, entertaining, 'small', feminine, when full development of material would require a serious or larger tone and treatment. Pulling away from depths and complexity. Irony, wit, the arch, instead of directness; diffuse emotion or detachment instead of tragedy. Avoiding seriousness altogether. Concealing intellect, analytical ability, objectivity; or refusing to credit that one is capable of them. Abdicating "male" realms" "the large", the social, the political.[13]

The description partly fits the complex "Kit" who, while often outspoken herself, still advocated that the female journalist should "try to infuse a little of her charming femininity into her writings..."[14] But there are other facets to her work that must be noted as well. The journalist's job during

that era was to entertain as well as to educate, and a certain amount of invention was acceptable, as long as it was based on truth.[15] "Kit" took a great deal of literary license in what she wrote, presenting herself as a heroine who broke away from gender-based restrictions. Here, Ellen Moers' concept of "heroinism" or "literary feminism...a heroic structure for the female voice in literature"[16] is helpful. Moers discusses acceptable female heroines in fiction including the traveller "...who moves, who acts, who copes with vicissitude and adventure" and the most "powerful" one of all, the educator/mother.[17] They are models which fit "Kit" very well, both in relation to her efforts to escape from women's sphere in journalism through travel writing and her compliance to the expectation that she describe her adventures from "a woman's point of view."

The 1890's was the era of "stunt" journalism in the newspaper world. An adventurous journalist would become the main participant in an exciting exploit and then write about the experience. One of the most famous instances was the 1889 journey of Elizabeth Cochrane ("Nelly Bly") of the New York World around the world in 72 days.[18] Travel articles in general had great popular appeal as they represented adventure to a nineteenth century audience.[19]

In 1892, two years after "Kit" joined the Mail, she started taking trips abroad. Most of her travel articles were written for "Woman's Kingdom," which she still conducted, with all its regular "domestic" features, from long distance through the

mails. She travelled to England and Ireland in 1892, to the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, to California, across Canada and to the West Indies in 1894, and to Britain again in 1897, where she covered Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Her biggest assignment came a year later -- the Spanish-American War. But even her work in Cuba was influenced by the expectation that she would cover the conflict from a womanly and therefore limited perspective.

In 1898, North American newspapers were full of articles which denigrated Spain as weak, corrupt and unable to prevent its oppressed Cuban subjects from allying with their strong, young neighbor, the United States of America.[20] Several North American newspapers gleefully took bets on the outcome of the tensions between Spain and the U.S.[21] "Kit" saw that the Americans had an economic stake in winning Cuba, with its sugar and tobacco crops, and was upset by what she saw as war-mongering by politicians and "...those newspaper wreckers! With their screetching (sic) headlines and their $50,000 bets!"[22] She was not impressed by their appeals to nobility of spirit in potential American volunteer soldiers.

> As to the humane aspects of the case -- "To the rescue of Cuba!" Certainly: but O my Masters!... What of America's treatment of the Red Man? The irony of these things is exquisite.[23]

"Kit" had grown up amid fierce sectarian fighting in Ireland and had never liked war. When ever one broke out, she always criticized newspapers for their jingoism.[24] The Cuban conflict was no different.

> We lose sight of the sadness of war when we are confronted with the big headlines in the newspapers that exploit bombardments and battles, and the blowing up of ships, and the victory of the one side over the other. We do not see the limbs of men torn asunder, nor hear the choking cries of the wounded as they drift down with the sinking ships. We do not think of the shocking desolation that will sweep over the hearts of the mothers and the wives and the sisters of the poor fellows who go under. All this is hidden from us. We see only the headlines. We think only of the Stock Exchange. When there are no battles, it is not good business for the news-mongers. When there are, the more blood and bones that can be put into the announcements, the finer the "sensation"...It is on woman that war falls heaviest.[25]

Her sentiments would not necessarily have alienated her readers. There were many Canadians who, influenced by the liberal reform movements of the time, were anti-war, preferring to believe that rational negotiation could prevent armed conflicts.[26] But at the same time, the newspapers gloried in war stories. British and American war correspondents, who covered the first American attack on Cuba from a press despatch boat near the battle scene,[27] had heroic stature, especially in their own eyes. One journalist described them as:

> ...men of daring, resource and ability, who are attracted by the fascination of war, and by a desire to play a part, however humble, in the most awful, grim, and tragic drama enacted on the human stage...(who) run as great a risk of being killed or wounded as any soldier in the fighting line.[28]

As a journalist, the adventure-seeking "Kit" was excited by the Cuban conflict, despite her antipathy towards war. "I wish I were a man. I would be somewhere in it."[29] Although she knew

"they wouldn't let a lace flounce over the side of a cruiser for all the money in the United States treasury,"[30] by mid-May, she was in Washington, trying to acquire press accreditation from the U.S. Army. "Kit" had somehow persuaded the Mail and Empire to send her to war.

At first, she reported, the U.S. Secretary of War, General R. A. Alger did not want her to travel with the army soldiers, who would be pitching tents in rough settings under a hot sun and "'lounging around half-dressed. It is no place at all for a lady.'"[31] But he relented after she used her professional and social connections, which included the President of the International Press Union of Women Journalists, Mary Lockwood,[32] officials of the Canadian Branch of the Red Cross Society, and the British Ambassador to Washington.[33] Noted the Boston Transcript:

> Being a lady by birth and in the best sense of the word, she has been fortunate in preserving as friends people with position with whom newspaper work has brought her in contact, owing to the tact and discrimination she has shown in never overstepping the bounds between what is legitimate for the public to know and what good taste prompts to withhold from publication.[34]

The Mail and Empire's decision to send a woman to war should not be seen as a new commitment to equality of the sexes in journalism but as a "stunt" obviously designed to boost circulation. A front-page announcement assured readers that "Kit" would send back reports "which will certainly prove to Canadians, at least, the most vividly interesting of any that will be penned

from the scene of conflict."[35] Her newspaper also ran prominent subscription advertisements: "'Kit' as a War Correspondent. The Only Lady Ever Accredited to this Position now represents the Mail and Empire at the Seat of War."[36] She may have been the only accredited one, but two other women were also in Cuba at the time. They were 24-year-old Anna Benjamin of Leslie's Illustrated Weekly and Mrs. Trumbull White, of the Chicago Record, who was also acting as a Red Cross nurse.[37]

Rival newspapers saw her assignment as an attempt to add to the Mail and Empire's circulation. The Catholic Register, expected her, as a woman, to provide maternal insights on the horrors of war and the hospital services provided for young soldiers at the front. In fact, her gender was seen as an advantage.

> That her letters from the war-field will be graphic and brilliant there is no doubt, and perhaps there is no woman writer today who could better pourtray (sic) the awful horrors of modern war, and bring home to the mothers and daughters of English-speaking people the brutality and barbarity of war, unless as a last resource... being a woman among the nurses she will be in a position to gain information of intense interest about the hospital service such as no male war correspondent has ever yet been able to gather on the field at first hand.[38]

Her female colleagues were intrigued with "Kit's" new assignment. "Polly" of the Chicago Times-Herald, envied her, praised her journalistic abilities and commented with an insight that suggested she knew the temperamental "Kit" well:

> A strange, pathetic, fiery, alluring, talented personality has gone to Tampa, and I watch the outcome curiously. The woman war correspondent is a new quantity. We shall prove her mettle to the world. It is a rare chance that has come to "Kit" and if I know her at all, she is tossing about the prize in her little hand, viewing it disdainfully and saying, "What's the use?" and at the same time is doing her level best to outwrite every male correspondent on the field.[39]

"M.H.L." of The Register respected "Kit" for her decision to go to Cuba, even though she was leaving behind -- perhaps forever-- her two children. Both son "Thady", then aged 13, and daughter "Patsy", then about 11, were already well known to her newspaper readers since "Kit" wrote of them often. For "M.H.L", her leaving them was not grounds for criticism, but for professional praise:

> Poor Kit! away off amidst horrors of which you you are only now on the outskirts, the greatest pledge you could have given of the earnestness of your work was, that you were willing to leave your children, your Patsy and Thady, whom you so strongly love; when such love gives place to duty, duty will surely be well performed.[40]

"Kit" made it clear to her readers that she had volunteered for the job and was not only determined to survive the experience but make a success of it.

> I am going of my own free will and desire...I have no doubt but like the cat and the proverbial bad penny, I shall eventually come back. Regarding the work in hand to do, the lexicon of youth is not the only dictionary that has the word "fail" expurgated from its pages. The thought of two little children somewhere in Canada, and the thought of the dear north land, with her summers and her snows, will often crowd in upon and efface every other....[41]

The Mail and Empire treated "Kit's" appointment as a novelty, at the same time, making it clear that her work would not "conflict" with that of male correspondents. She was to "supplement" their breaking news coverage, which was supplied to the newspaper in a cooperative arrangement with the London Times and the New York Herald.[42] But it did mean that, for once, she was able to leave "Woman's Kingdom" in other hands[43] and concentrate on her Cuba assignment.

It could be argued that her secondary reporting role gave her a lot more flexibility in what she could write about, especially since she was not under the same deadline pressure as the male correspondents. In fact, she competed with them at first, with some success, but they and the American authorities prevented her from getting from Florida to Cuba in time to cover the major battles. In the end, she wrote vivid descriptions of the destruction and suffering the war brought about -- a record that did not get front-page coverage but provided a more encompassing view than daily reports of skirmishes.[44]

At Tampa, as war correspondents and soldiers waited to be transported to Cuba, British newspapermen took "Kit" under their wing. But even so, being a woman was difficult. The male journalists, who kept busy buying horses, tents and other supplies, teased her about the kind of dress and gear she would acquire. Their jesting may have raised her own doubts about her role, but she kept her tone light:

The boys suggest a bronco, Mexican saddle,

> short hair, and -- bloomers, but I am dickering for a ride behind each one of them, day about, in return for which I guarantee to sew on buttons and do the cooking... There are many things a woman can and may do, but the line may be very safely drawn at army correspondent. However, nous verrons, as they say in France.[45]

Her feminine flippancy did not fool her male colleagues. Charles E. Hands of the London Daily Mail described her as "a tall, healthy, youngish woman, with a quiet, self-reliant manner and an alert, intelligent, enterprising look." At first, the men regarded her presence among them as "comic." But she was determined to get to Cuba, she told the skeptical Hands, "and not all the old generals in the old army are going to stop me." He wrote that, although "Kit" pretended to be covering the war from the woman's angle, she was awake and out looking for scoops long before the other journalists. She sometimes succeeded, being fluent in Spanish as well as French as English. For example, she learned that the U.S. Army planned to land a cargo of ammunition and food for the insurgents in Cuba. The shipment was to be smuggled in a side-wheel steamer, information her male colleagues had been unsuccessful at pinning down. She passed the information on to Hands.[46]

While she was in Tampa, she wrote articles on topics ranging from the best battle strategy likely to be employed by the United States -- in which she described the Spanish as filthy and the Americans as heroes[47] -- to more maternal concerns about the young, green, American soldiers. In one vignette, she was being

given a tour of a U.S. army camp when she heard the strains of "Home Sweet Home" coming from a tent. Upon lifting the flap, she saw a young American volunteer, playing the soulful tune on his harmonica. Instantly reminded of her own son, she wrote:

> I cannot express to you the feeling that came over me...I suppose it is because one is a woman, and a bit emotional, that the tears come to one's eyes; but I dropped the flap without a word, and there was something besides the sun in my eyes as we walked silently on. One is beginning to realize what war means, and I tell you it is poor and squalid, and a bit heartbreaking...[48]

By June 23, most of the war correspondents had joined military units or had otherwise made their way to Cuba.[49] But "Kit" was left behind. None of the military leaders, or the Red Cross, will give her passage. Complained "Kit" to her readers:

> For be it known unto you that the gods who preside over the destinies of Women and War have decided that these two shall not meet. "Cupid is the god for women", thunders Jove, "Mars for men." And great generals brushed me away as though I were an impertinent fly.[50]

The generals may have been influenced by the male war correspondents, many of whom did not want her in Cuba at all. "Kit" kept silent about their opposition for several months after she returned to Canada, but when the rival Toronto Globe boasted of its own success in getting news out of Cuba, she became indignant:

> This unlucky person quite failed -- owing to her sex -- to go "with the troops from Tampa." She was very keenly made to feel her inferiority by

> some of the gallant male members of the press, who, she was informed on what she supposes to be fair authority, did all in their power to prevent her from attaining the object of her mission, as well as otherwise depressing and harassing her.

Newspapermen from the west, it appears, took her part and "did all they could to cheer and help", but were outnumbered by many from the eastern papers.[51]

There may have been another reason she was left behind. Years later, she claimed that she was briefly arrested by what she referred to as the American "secret service" for ignoring military censorship rules and sending a coded message to her editor that the troops were about to leave Florida for Cuba. Her editor, she wrote, was furious with her for getting caught.[52]

Her failure to get to Cuba left "Kit" deeply discouraged and tempted to return home,[53] but she persevered and finally her connections in Washington paid off. She got passage on a naval supply boat, the "Niagara", from Key West. In an article datelined July 28, she announced: "After nearly three months despairing efforts to get here, the great force which we call will has conquered. I am looking at the hills of Cuba. " But the same day's headline in the Mail and Empire made it clear she was too late to see action: "No Doubt Now the War is Over", it read.[54]

Undaunted, she travelled to the scenes of battles to record their aftermath. She slept in the open in the hills outside of Santiago "in a boy's rubber suit" to avoid being raped or murdered and rode her horse astride as she travelled from one

grim battleground to another, a story she told only later.[55] She sent back vivid descriptions of the destruction she saw and did not spare her sympathy for the defeated Spanish soldiers, many of whom died in the most gruesome circumstances.

Once, travelling by boat, she reached the scene of the great naval battle of the war, about 48 miles outside of Santiago de Cuba, where the Spanish fleet had been defeated by the U.S. Navy. She reported that the despairing captain of one ship, the "Almirante Oquendo", had gotten his crew drunk, locked them below, set fire to the cruiser and then committed suicide.
In fact, her report was quite wrong. The "Almirante Uquendo's" captain, Joaquin Maria Lazaga, actually died of a heart attack shortly after surrendering his ship, which had been hit by American fire fifty-seven times.[56]

When "Kit" got to the scene she found the bodies of Spanish sailors scattered all over the beach along with the battered remains of their ships. Judging from a photograph taken at the time, her description of the "Almirante Oquendo" was accurate, at least, if somewhat dramatic:

> ...(it) lay, half upon the beach, like some dying monster that had tried to crawl up out of the sea and had died in the attempt... Half burnt rope ends dangled in the masts. Torn edges of iron flared out everywhere. You would think an army of demons had been let loose from hell to twist, and smash, and batter the ships, to torture and burn and wreak impish cruelties on the men and beasts. What these Spanish sailors must have suffered on that July day in the blinding smoke and heat and stress of this terrible battle cannot be told by human lips or written by any pen.[57]

"Kit's" report that Captain Lazaga had committed suicide might have been a war rumour, rather than a fantasy of her own invention. She maintained that it was male war correspondents who often fabricated stories from Cuba, and she never did or would:

> I think the woman reporter is more honest or reliable under certain conditions than her brother craftsmen, or, it may be that she is only more timid. In any case, no press woman could endure to sully her work by false dispatches. This much I will say for the very often misjudged and underpaid newspaper woman.[58]

Besides her vivid descriptions of the scenes of battle, "Kit" also wrote of the suffering endured by the Cubans and by the ill-equipped and barely-trained American soldiers, many of whom contracted yellow fever. Their own government had not provided them with a hospital ship or enough food or medical supplies, a fact that was driven painfully home to "Kit" when she accompanied scores of them back to the United States on board the Seguranca, a transport vessel. There was not enough food, water, or medicine. She and the other newspaper correspondents donated their quinine and other medical supplies and she helped the lone ship's doctor nurse the soldiers. She told her readers that there had been some mismanagement involved with the war and the evacuation of the American troops but refused to lay specific blame on anyone, saying it was better to wait until all the facts were known.[59] She wrote about the nightmare on board more fully only years later:

> Sixteen days in a loathsome transport, with one

> hundred and thirty-three men in every stage of sickness, living on rotten rations and apparently forgotten by the country for which they were suffering....One becomes a machine. There is nothing for pity, or sympathy or hope to feed upon. There is little even for despair. It is the last to go, and then only the body lives, the bones move, the dull brain answers only to the call of duty, the dull ears heed not the outcries of the sick, the dull eyes see not the ghastliness of gaping wounds. It is all the same! What matter if the feet slip in blood instead of rain?[60]

She admitted that she never wrote the "miserable story of Cuba because General Alger...begged me to refrain..."[61]

Upon her arrival in New York, the sight of a glass of plentiful milk waiting for her in her hotel room produced "a hurricane of tears, the breakdown after all those hideous days and nights... "[62] There were times, she told her readers, when she wondered if she would survive the Cuba ordeal and see her children again.

> The last letters to the chicks -- the poor chicks! and to the few other dear ones -- such a little circle! were written and laid aside to be given "in the event of my death in Cuba." And yet back I toddled, hale and well, without a scratch or fever. God be thanked! Only a bit shocked and full of tears... Then the chicks! Thade was up to my eyebrows when I left and he's a bang length over my crown, now, and Pattikins is creeping up from her nook under my arm. It was great to be half-strangled by them when they saw me.[63]

She told her readers she never wanted to be a war correspondent again,[64] although time and distance from the event changed her mind.[65]

A few readers criticized "Kit" for going to Cuba in the first place,[66] but she received a great deal of professional recognition and praise for her work. A male colleague of hers, the Mail and Empire columnist H. H. Wiltshire, quoted the editor of an influential U.S. daily, who pronounced it "....the best work I have seen since the war broke out." The unnamed editor went on to describe her literary style as "...the work of an artist...infused with a certain, subtle, human sympathy.."[67]

Her sister-journalists were certainly impressed. She was invited to speak before the International Press Union of Women Journalists in Washington, an occasion which the privately-shy "Kit" claimed she found more nerve-wracking than Cuba itself.

> And you read your little paper in fear and trembling before a solemn audience of special correspondents and editors of women's pages, and wish you were any place on earth -- even in Santiago -- rather than standing there under that stream of light, reading something you didn't understand, in a strange voice you had never heard before. You had to steady yourself against the table or you would have fallen flat down, and your hands shivered so that the leaves of your paper began a tremolo symphony of their own that was fearsome.[68]

For awhile, "Kit" became a public heroine[69] with imitators -- women claiming that they had also gone off to the Spanish-American war. She wrote that she was, as far as she knew, the only woman to be issued a war press pass by the United States government[70] and the only female war correspondent in Cuba.[71]

"Kit's" adventures may have made her famous, but they did not improve her finances.[72] Some years later, she complained in a

private letter to a friend that when she had returned from Cuba "absolutely coinless", she was rebuffed by the Mail and Empire's tight-fisted business manager, whom she described as "the meanest soul that ever was put into a body."[73] In addition, she could not persuade the newspaper to help her publish a book of her Cuba columns or any other descriptions of her adventures, similar to her earlier one about Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.[74] As she explained to one reader, Cuba was already "old news":

> So you were disappointed that you did not hear more of my Cuban experiences "since the Mail advertised it so." Well, you would have had a good deal more, only it was represented that the public had gotten tired of war stories and wanted no more of the Yanko-Spanko experiences.[75]

It is clear that the experience of the woman war correspondent in Cuba was quite different from that of her male counterpart. Kathleen Blake Coleman's work in Cuba was recognized in the end mainly because of her own determination to overcome almost insurmountable opposition. The plan to send her there in the first place had more to do with boosting circulation through a gimmick that any real recognition of her reportorial skills. As she tried to carry our her assignment, American authorities and many male colleagues refused to recognize her as a professional and allow her to travel with the troops as most other correspondents did. She was pressured to produce stories from a woman's angle, which meant that her work was seen as marginal, and it also appears that her newspaper did not pay her full remuneration for her services.

As a war correspondent, "Kit" used her professional skills to compete as an equal with her male colleagues. Like them, she paid some lip service to American military interests by, for example, not revealing the extent of their mismanagement of the war. In other words, she tried to keep on the good side of the authorities. But in her own way, particularly with her descriptions of the damage the war caused, she condemned it. She was most able to do this by allowing herself to be "female", that is, by letting her maternalism take over and express concern, for example, for the ill-prepared, fever-stricken and dying soldiers on all sides of the conflict.

In examining the experiences of women journalists such as "Kit", it is important not to make exceptions and heroines of them, but to put them in the context of the domestic, social and professional positions of women in their day. [76] Professional women who grew up in the Victorian era often felt ambivalent about their new roles -- and sometimes chose work or ways of expressing themselves that would allow them to adopt a mothering stance.[77] "Kit" was no exception, but her enduring appeal throughout her career was that she was able to combine what were seen in her day as daringly "masculine" characteristics with conventional "feminine" ones. She was outspoken, intellectual, emotional and maternal -- and was Canada's most successful woman journalist for 25 years.

1. There are several women's history sources on this era. Two of the classics are Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Women's Rights Struggle in the United States (Harvard University Press, repr. Atheneum 1970) and Catherine Cleverdon, The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1974.)For an historical survey of American women in journalism, see Marion Marzolf Up from the Footnote New York: Hastings House 1978).

2. Michael Schudson, Discovering the News - A Social History of American Newspapers (New York: Basic Books Inc. 1978), 100. Technological and editorial changes in Canada's nineteenth century newspapers are examined by Paul Rutherford, A Victorian Authority - the Daily Press in Nineteenth Century Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1982) and W.H. Kesterton, The History of Journalism in Canada (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada. Carleton University Library Series No. 36, 1978.)

3. In 1890 there were 888 female journalists in the United States. By 1900, this number more than doubled to 2,193 -- still only 7.3 per cent of those in the profession. Marzolf, 21, 26. In 1891 there were 756 journalists in Canada, of whom 35 were women. Eighteen of those women worked in Ontario. Census of Canada 1891, Vol. II, 1891, 189.

4. The debate over suitable women's page material was vigorously aired in the New York Herald, June 7, 14, 21, 28, 1891. See also Barbara Freeman "'Every Stroke Upward': Women Journalists in Canada 1880 - 1906" in Canadian Women's Studies, Vol. 7, No. 3, (Fall 1986). Reprinted in Laurence Steven, Douglas Parker and Jack Lewis (eds.) From Reading to Writing: A Reader, Rhetoric and Handbook (Toronto: Prentice Hall Canada 1988)

5. An examination of her work and career is forthcoming in Barbara Freeman, The Queen of Woman's Kingdom: The Journalism of Kathleen Blake Coleman ("Kit") 1889-1915 (working title) Carleton University Press, Ottawa, Canada. Spring 1990. There are several popular articles available, including Robin Rowland, "Kit's Secret" in Content, November 1978 and "Kit Watkins" World's First Accredited Woman War Correspondent" in Content, May 1978, reprinted in The News: Inside the Canadian Media, B. Zwicker and D. MacDonald, (eds.), (Ottawa: Deneau 1982). Excerpts from her columns have been compiled in Ted Ferguson, Kit Coleman, Queen of Hearts (Toronto: Doubleday 1978).

6. Between 1850 and 1950, fifty percent of Irish emigrants were women, forced to leave Ireland because of lack of jobs and poor marriage prospects -- legacies of the Irish famine. Joseph J. Lee, "Women and the Church Since the Famine," in Margaret MacCurtain and Donncha O Corrain (eds.), Women in Irish History (Dublin: Arlen House, The Women's Press, 1978), 38.

7. Public Archives of Canada, Kathleen Blake Coleman Papers, MG 29 D 112. Finding Aid 1724. After she arrived in Canada, Kathleen married E.J. Watkins with whom she had a son and a daughter. They separated, probably around 1889, and she began working as a journalist to support her children. She divorced Watkins before marrying a Canadian doctor, Theobald Coleman, upon her return from Cuba in 1898. Interview with Kathleen Blake Coleman's grandchildren, Mr. J. B. Gartshore and Mrs. Kit Waterous, conducted by Barbara Freeman at Ancaster, Ontario, Canada. 7 Dec. 1987.

8. Her first "Woman's Kingdom" byline appeared in late 1889. Toronto Mail, 26 October 1889, 5.

9. The maverick Mail merged with the Conservative Empire in February 1895. Most 19th century Canadian newspapers were affiliated with a political party. Rutherford, Appendix, pp. 235 - 240.

10. See, for example, her response to a reader, "Romona", Toronto Mail, 17 Sept. 1892, 8.

11. Catherine L. Covert, "Journalism History and Women's Experience: A Problem in Conceptual Change," in Journalism History 8:1, Spring 1981, 4. The situation has been improving over the last decade. Susan J. Henry ""Changing Media History Through Women's History" in Pamela J. Creddon (ed.) Women in Mass Communications - Challenging Gender Values, Sage Publications (Focus Editions, Vol. 106, Summer 1989).

12. See for example, Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own -- British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing (Princeton University Press 1977); various contributors in Elizabeth Abel (ed.), Writing and Sexual Difference (The University of Chicago Press 1982).

13. Tillie Olsen, Silences, (New York: Laurel Edition, Dell Publishing Co. Inc. 1983), pp. 271 - 277.

14. Toronto Mail, 26 November 1889, 5.

15. Schudson 69-74; Rutherford, 128.

16. Ellen Moers, Literary Women (New York: Doubleday and Company 1976), pp. 122 - 123.

17. Ibid., ps. 126, 214 - 215.

18. Cochrane's most important work was the investigative journalism done after her travels. Marzolf, 23.

19. Most travelling journalists were subsidized by their newspapers and their subscribers. Steamship fare across the Atlantic cost between $130 and $150. Eva-Marie Kroller, The Canadian Traveller in Europe 1851-1900, (Vancouver: University of Columbia Press 1987), p.s 28, 59.

20. See for example, the Toronto Mail and Empire, 3 Apr. 1898, Part 2, 3.

21. Newspaper coverage of the conflict is examined by Joseph E. Wisan, The Cuban Crisis as Reflected in the New York Press (1895-1898), (New York: Octagon Books 1965).

22. Mail and Empire, 23 Apr. 1898, Part 2, 4 and response to "Your American Subject", Ibid., 5. Some writers have since claimed the war was virtually started by the New York Journal and the World in a sensational, jingoistic battle for circulation. For example, Phillip Knightley, The First Casualty, (New York and London: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich 1975), pp. 55 - 59. But journalism historian Marvin N. Olasky and other academics have argued that those newspapers did not characterize the national mood. Marvin Olasky, "Hawks or Doves: Texas Press and Spanish-American War", Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 1. Spring 1987, pp. 205 - 211.

23. Mail and Empire, 30 Apr. 1898, Part 2, 4. Historians have long argued over the causes of the war. See Philip S. Foner The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism 1895-1902, Vols. I & II (New York and London: Monthly Review Press 1972).

24. Toronto Mail, 10 Sept. 1892, 5. See also her criticism of newspaper reports about the Chinese-Korean conflict. Ibid., 11 Aug. 1894, 5.

25. Mail and Empire 7 May 1898, Part 2, 4.

26. Thomas P. Socknat, Witness Against War: Pacifism in Canada 1900 - 1945 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1987), 41.

27. Mail and Empire, 28 Apr. 1898, 1.

28. Michael MacDonagh, "Position of the War Correspondent" Ibid, 30 Apr. 1898, Part 2, 2, reprinted from Fortnightly. See also Knightley, The First Casualty, pp. 42 - 55.

29. Mail and Empire, 30 Apr. 1898, Part 2, 4 and response to "Tommy A.", Ibid., 5.

30. Ibid., 7 May 1898, Part 2, 4.

31. Ibid., 14 May, 1898 Part 2, 4.

32. Woman's Tribune, 11 Mar. 1899. Clipping in PAC K.B.C. Papers, Vol. 3, File 1. Scrapbook.

33. Mail and Empire, 14 May 1898, Part 2, 4. In Kathleen's personal papers, there is a note from R.A. Alger to the Commanding General of the United States Forces, dated 6 June 1898, giving Kathleen Blake Watkins, as she was known then, permission to accompany the military expedition to the United States "out of this country, if not inconsistent with the best interests of the service." There is also a telegram from R.A. Alger, dated 20 June 1898, to Kathleen Blake Watkins, giving her permission to accompany any Red Cross boat to Cuba. PAC K.B.C. Papers, Vol. 1, File 3.

34. Undated clipping from the Boston Transcript, Ibid. She had earlier used her friendship with Canada's Prime Minister to help her with her newspaper assignments. PAC K.B.C. Papers, Vol. 1, File 4. Correspondence between Kathleen Blake Watkins and Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

35. Mail and Empire, 19 May 1898, 1.

36. Ibid. 21 May 1898, 7.

37. Charles H. Brown, The Correspondent's War (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1967), pp. 210-213. Brown devalues "Kit's" work for the "Mail and Express" (sic) as "sob sister" copy. See also Brown, "A Woman's Odyssey: the War Correspondence of Anna Benjamin", Journalism Quarterly, Autumn 1969. Actually, both "Kit" and Benjamin reported on the conditions faced by the Cuban people and the soldiers on both sides. Marzolf confuses Benjamin with "Kit", whom she does not mention at all. Marzolf, pp. 27-28.

38. Reprinted in the Mail and Empire, 20 May 1898, 6.

39. Quoted in the Mail and Empire, 24 May 1898, 10.

40. Undated clipping from The Register in PAC K.B.C. Papers, Vol. 3, File 1, Scrapbook. The children were at boarding schools near Toronto at the time. Article on "Kit" from the Graphic, reprinted in the Mail and Empire, June 11, Part 2, 4.

41. Ibid., 21 May 1898, Part 2, 4.

42. Subscription ad in the Mail and Empire, 21 May 1898, 7.

43. Her articles appeared on various inside pages, sometimes in the "Kingdom" space. Much of the women's page material used in her absence were syndicated features.

44. American journalists Rheta Childe Dorr and Bessie Beatty were also assigned secondary roles by their editors when they covered the Russian Revolution of 1917-1918, with similar journalistic results. Zena Beth McGlashan, "Women Witness the Russian Revolution: Analyzing Ways of Seeing" in Journalism History, 12:2 Summer 1985.

45. Mail and Empire, 26 May 1898, 5.

46. Reprinted in the Mail and Empire, June 25, 1898, 4.

47. Ibid., 25 May 1898, 10.

48. Ibid., 26 May 1898, 5.

49. Brown, The Correspondents War, 308.

50. Mail and Empire, 20 June, 1898, 2.

51. Ibid., 28 Jan. 1899, Part 2, pp. 4 - 5. The Globe's correspondent, John A. Ewan, was an exception. He had apparently supported her attempts to get to Cuba. Ibid., 20 June, 1898, 2. Brown writes that there were several hundred reporters but the U.S. Army would accommodate only 89 of the male journalists. Brown, "A Woman's Odyssey", 525.

52. "The Peddlar's Pack", Canada Monthly, Oct. 1911, pp. 463-464; Nov. 1914, 40. At this writing, I have been unable to verify her story from other sources. She had reported at the time that four correspondents who infringed on the military censor's rules had their accreditation recalled, but did not mention any names. Mail and Empire, 4 June, 1898, Part 2, 4.

53. Ibid. 23 June, 1898, 2.

54. Ibid., 8 Aug. 1898, 1. Both Anna Benjamin and Mrs. Trumbull White got to Cuba a month earlier, before Santiago fell. Brown, The Correspondents' War, 212.

55. Mail and Empire, 2 Apr. 1910, 21. See also clipping from the Winnipeg Telegram, 11 June 1906, 4. PAC K.B.C. Papers, Vol. 3, File 1, Scrapbook. Most women rode side-saddle in her day.

56. David F. Trask The War with Spain in 1898 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. 1981), 265.

57. "Cervera's Lost Battleships", Mail and Empire, 27 Aug. 1898, Part 2, 4. Photo is in G.J.A. O'Toole, The Spanish War -- An American Epic - 1898, (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company 1984), 261 (author's private collection).

58. Canada Monthly , February 1915, 249.

59. Mail and Empire, 10 Sept. 1898, Part 2, 4. Historians have since been quite critical of the U.S. government and military. See, for example, Foner, Vol. II, Ch. XV.

60. Mail and Empire, 7 Jan. 1905, 18; "Kit's Column", Vancouver News Advertiser, 23 Aug. 1914, 8.

61. "Kit's Column", Hamilton Herald, 12 Sept. 1914, 8.

62. Mail and Empire, 24 Sept. 1898, Part 2, 4. See also undated clipping from the Winnipeg Tribune 11 June 1906, n.p. in PAC K.B.C. Papers, Vol. 3, File 1, Scrapbook.

63. Response to "Adhah", Mail and Empire, 5 Nov. 1898, Part 2, 8.

64. Response to "Pictures", Ibid., 22 Oct. 1898, Part 2, 8.

65. Response to "Eleanor", Ibid., 18 May 1907, 18.

66. Response to "M.E.R.", Ibid., 27 Oct. 1898, Part 2, 8.

67. "The Flaneur", Ibid., 20 Aug. 1898, Part 2, 6.

68. "Woman's Kingdom", Ibid., 25 Feb. 1899, Part 2, 4.

69. The Mail and Empire apparently issued a picture of her -- one copy of which she saw on a factory wall, decorated with facial hair and a fez. Ibid., 27 May 1899, 17.

70. Ibid., 26 May 1900, pp. 16 - 17.

71. Ibid., 27 May 1899, 17.

72. "Kit" was an advocate of equal pay and often complained that women journalists were poorly paid. Although she never revealed how much she made herself, estimates vary from a low $20 dollars a month when she started her career, to a more generous $35 a week at its height. Freeman, "Every Stroke Upward'", 45.

73. She was referring to her out of pocket expenses. Undated letter (circa 1911) to Katherine Hale, former literary editor of the Mail and Empire, from Kathleen Blake Coleman. Hale-Garvin Papers, Lorne 2 Pierce Collection, 20016 B032f008, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

74. "Kit", To London for the Jubilee, (Toronto: Morang 1897).

75. Response to "Gordon", Mail and Empire, 4 March 1899, Part 2, 4.

76. See Covert, Glashan, and Henry, op cit.

77. Carol Dyhouse, Girls Growing Up In Late Victorian and Edwardian England, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; 1981) pp. 34-36.